

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 01558 031617Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15
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R 031453Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5121
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY SANA

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 1558

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: IS,XF
SUBJECT: PRESS REACTION TO KHARTOUM MINI-SUMMIT

1. THE KHARTOUM CONFERENCE FEBRUARY 27-28 BETWEEN SADAT, ASSAD AND NIMERIRI EVOKED MODEST EDITORIAL COMMENT IN THE ISRAELI PRESS, WITH THE TWO MAIN THEMES OF ARAB-ISRAELI ROLES IN THE RED SEA AND SUPERPOWER RIVALRY IN THE HORN OF AFRICA.

2. HAARETZ STATED THAT THE CONFERENCE WAS MEANT TO DEMONSTRATE EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN SUPPORT FOR THE UNSTABLE NIMEIRI REGIME, A SUPPORT GIVEN BY THEM IN TRADE FOR SUDANESE BACKING IN THE INTER-ARAB ARENA. AT THE SAME TIME, PRESIDENT SADAT AND KING KHALED OF SAUDI ARABIA ARE MORE WORRIED ABOUT SOVIET PRESENCE AND ACTIVITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST THAN ABOUT LINING UP SUDAN AS A NEW FRONT AGAINST
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PAGE 02 TEL AV 01558 031617Z

ISRAEL IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE RED SEA, HAARETZ SAID.

3. DAVAR COMMENTED THAT WHILE SUDAN HAS JOINED THE EGYPTIAN-SYRIAN "POLITICAL LEADERSHIP" AND THEREBY HINTED A BREAK WITH THE SOVIETS, SEVERAL GRAVE PROBLEMS IN THE RED SEA AREA MAY RESULT FROM IT. FIRST, IF THE

KHARTOUM SIGNATORIES SUCCEED IN TURNING THE RED SEA INTO AN ARAB LAKE, THIS WOULD DO UNTOLD HARM TO ISRAELI INTERESTS IN THAT INTERNATIONAL WATERWAY. SECOND, THE PARTICIPANTS HAVE DECIDED TO BACK THE MOSLEM REBELS IN ERITREA AND SHIFT THE CONTROL OF ETHIOPIA'S LONG BORDER STRIP, CENTERING UPON THE PORT OF MASSAWA, TO ANOTHER PRO-ARAB STATE. THIS MOVE FOLLOWS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW EGYPTIAN POSITIONS AT BAB AL MANDEB. THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT THE KHARTOUM ALLIANCE WILL RETAIN ITS ANTI-SOVIET NATURE, AND ISRAEL MUST FOLLOW DEVELOPMENTS CLOSELY TO PROTECT HER INTERESTS IN THE AREA.

4. MAARIV DESCRIBED AS "MERE BACKGROUND NOISES" THE ANTI-ISRAELI DECLARATIONS MADE AT KHARTOUM, AND SAID THAT THE REAL PURPOSE OF THE SUMMIT WAS TO CONTINUE U.S.-SAUDI EFFORTS TO ENSURE WESTERN CONTROL OVER THE RED SEA AND ITS OUTLET TO THE INDIAN OCEAN. ACCORDING TO MAARIV, STATE DEPARTMENT DOCUMENTS SHOW THAT ALREADY IN 1945-46 EFFORTS WERE BEING MADE TO ENSURE SUCH CONTROL AS PART OF THE PLANNED STRATEGY FOR DEFENSE OF THE PERSIAN GULF AND THE ARABIAN PENINSULA, AND EVEN THEN SUDAN PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN THIS AMERICAN STRATEGY.
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